

Gender norms in the Western Balkans

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Question

What are the gender norms in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) at regional and national levels (similarities and differences between countries)? What are the baseline indicators of gender equality? Are there gendered sources of stability/resilience?

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1. Overview

The Western Balkans remains a region dominated by patriarchal gender norms. The biggest challenge for improving gender equality is changing the mentality of women and men towards traditional gender roles (Petričević, 2012). The literature consistently identifies social attitudes as a barrier to increasing gender equality. Many people are not aware of women's rights or gender non-discrimination laws (Petričević, 2012). In several areas of gender equality, legal provisions are adequate and conform to UN and international norms. However, these are not always

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implemented or adhered to in practice, due to lack of capacity, knowledge, resources or social barriers.

Standard indicators of gender equality include: female/male school enrolment; literacy rate; unemployment; maternal mortality; life expectancy; adolescent fertility rate; proportion of women in parliament¹. Others include violence against women and girls; gender equality policy and legislation. Much of the literature recognises the need to include men and raise men's awareness about gender issues. Most of the literature on the Western Balkans looks at interpersonal and household gender norms, such as girls' access to school, women's work and household decision making. There is also a strong literature on women's political participation and violence against women and girls.

This report provides a brief summary of the main gender issues in the region, as reported in the literature. It is not a comprehensive literature review, but a collection of resources which highlight the key points to consider on gender. Each country has a large selection of resources on its specific gendered issues, which can provide more detail. There is a companion piece to this report which focuses on the relationship between gender and conflict in the Western Balkans². This report sketches the main parameters of gender in the region. The main findings are:

- **Education:** Gender parity in education is good in the region, with nearly equal attendance of boys and girls. Increasing numbers of girls go to university. Gender issues are therefore around subjects they choose to study, and what schools teach about gender and sexuality.
- **Women's political participation:** All countries have a gender quota and there is quite strong policy in place for women's representation, but this is not always adhered to. Participation is still low, around 15 - 35 per cent. Women do not occupy decision-making or powerful positions. Serbia has the highest proportion of women in parliament – 34 per cent. Training, mentoring and forming cross-party women's groups have all been successful in increasing women's representation.
- **Sexual and reproductive health and rights:** Traditional gender roles and attitudes towards women's sexuality prevail. Serbia has become more conservative since the end of the conflict, due to a rise in religious nationalism. Kosovo has strong legislation on SRHR due to the strong UN presence. Access to maternity care is reasonable, but women may not go to the doctor for any other health needs. LGBTI rights are poorly protected, with rural areas showing worse discrimination than urban areas.
- **Violence against women and girls:** VAWG is prevalent and legal protections and services are weak. Domestic violence is perceived as a common problem in the region. Some of the literature identifies violence against women and girls as connected to violent conflict. In BiH, the legacy of war has created conditions of poverty, trauma and substance abuse, which contributes to domestic violence (Hughson, 2014). The history of violent conflict, patriarchal values, women's economic dependence, and an emphasis on women's role in keeping the family together has created conditions in which domestic

¹ World Bank Gender Data Portal: <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/home>

² Haider, H. (2017). *Gender and conflict in the Western Balkans* (GSDRC K4D Helpdesk Research Report 72). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

violence is largely accepted (Hughson, 2014). The prevalence of small arms and light weapons contributes to domestic violence, usually perpetrated by men against women. A study commissioned by SEESAC (Božanić, 2016) shows that there are strong links between SALW proliferation and violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence. Men involved in war or military conflicts are more likely to use a firearm in domestic violence than men who were not involved. This paper suggests that the male ownership of firearms reinforces gender norms of male dominance over women.

- **Women and work:** Women are formally employed much less than men. Traditional gender roles prevail. The labour market is around 37 per cent women. Women earn less and do not occupy high level positions.
- **Land and property:** Property is overwhelmingly owned by men. Inheritance almost always goes to men, even where women have the rights to it. Urban areas have more women owners than rural areas.
- **Migration:** Women refugees from Syria have been provided with some women-friendly services, but not enough. There is strong out-migration from Albania for economic reasons, but this does not seem to advantage women.
- **Roma:** All structural disadvantages experienced by women are experienced doubly by Roma women. Roma girls attend school less, marry young, do not work and do not have high aspirations. There appear to be no indications of change over the last decade.
- **Men and boys:** The ideal of hegemonic masculinity suggests that gun ownership and violence is linked to masculine identity and social status, and used as a way of asserting this identity. SEESAC recommends that reducing violence entails targeting the gendered social system which associates guns with masculine power, protection, and control over women.

2. Education

Gender parity in education is good in the region, with nearly equal school attendance of boys and girls. Increasing numbers of girls go to university. Gender issues are therefore around which subjects they choose to study, and what schools teach about gender and sexuality.

A gender analysis of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (BiH) (Hughson, 2014) shows that gender differences are successfully being minimised in education, with more women completing secondary school and university than men. The subjects of study are still gendered, with Information Technology, criminology and engineering vastly dominated by men (90, 75 and 82 per cent respectively). Women are overrepresented in education and rehabilitation; and medicine and pedagogy (85 and 59 per cent). Stereotypical representations of gender and gender roles are still taught in textbooks and classroom practice.

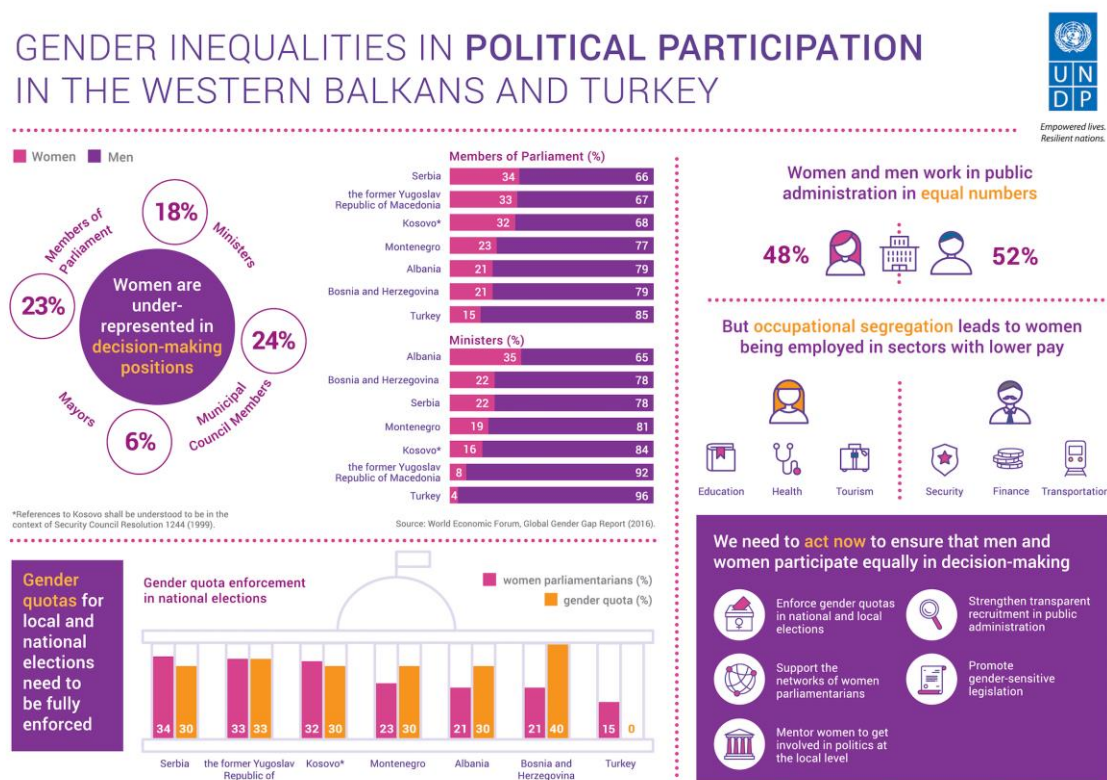
In **Serbia**, a review of schools found that two-thirds of teachers did not fully understand the difference between sex and gender, and are not sure what their school teaches on gender (CARE Serbia, 2011). Despite this, teachers say they are satisfied with the amount of attention paid to gender. In 2001, religious education was reintroduced to public schools, which actively promotes separate gender roles and a traditional vision of womanhood (Drezgic, 2010).

A brief review of male and female university students in **Albania** shows that, while there are no differences in academic performance between them, female students had lower levels of self-

belief and confidence than male students (Shkullaku, 2013). This suggests that discriminatory gender role stereotypes are still prevalent and undermining women's capacities (Shkullaku, 2013).

3. Women's political participation

All of the Western Balkan countries have a gender quota for the number of women elected. There is also quite strong policy in place for women's representation, but this is not always adhered to (Petričević, 2012). The literature states that 'women's participation is low', but with 20 to 30 per cent female parliamentarians, this is well in line with and better than the world average (23 per cent³). Serbia has the highest proportion of women in parliament in the region at 34 per cent. To increase women's presence, training, mentoring and forming cross-party women's groups have all been successful.



Source: UNDP: <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/img/Gender%20Equality/undp-rbec-infographic-women-political-participation.jpg>

Women continue to be underrepresented in positions which hold decision-making power. There are few female ministers (in 2012, BiH 0; Albania 1; Kosovo 2; Macedonia 3; Montenegro 3; Serbia 5. Petričević, 2012). Serbia has the highest proportion of female ministers in the region, at 35 per cent (Petričević, 2012). In the region, women make up only 15 per cent of mayors or council leaders, and 35 per cent of local or municipal councillors (UNDP, 2016). There are many ongoing plans, mechanisms and support structures to improve women's political participation in

³ <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

the region, and there has been considerable improvement since the end of the conflict (UNDP, 2016).

Serbia achieved 34 per cent women in parliament in 2012, due to an intervention by the Electoral Commission to hand out mandates according to the electoral list, which meant that women were deliberately selected (Petričević, 2012). This momentum also created the Women's Parliamentary Network (WPN), which has been particularly effective at broadening women's representation beyond 'women's issues', and in improving gender equality legislation (UNDP, 2016). The WPN organised a regional meeting in 2015 for women parliamentarians in south-east Europe, which agreed to cooperate in implementation of activities for gender equality (UNDP, 2016).

Macedonia's 2011 parliamentary elections gave 32.5 per cent of seats to women (Petričević, 2012). This is perhaps a result of the 2006 Election Code, which stipulates that one in every three positions on a party's candidate list for parliament and for municipal council must be filled by a woman (Petričević, 2012). Macedonia successfully formed a Women's Lobby in 2001, which has advocated and promoted women's political representation (UNDP, 2016). It has members from all political parties and sectors of society, and has achieved progress on gender equality through its collaborative and networking approach (UNDP, 2016).

In **Kosovo**, the law on gender equality aims for 50 per cent representation of both sexes, but election quotas are set at 30 per cent. In 2016, women's representation in the government as a whole, i.e. Ministries and the Office of the Prime Minister, was 40.6 per cent (KGSC, 2017). Women headed only 5.2 per cent of leadership positions in the Government in 2015, while in municipalities this percentage was 10.1 per cent (KGSC, 2017). The Women's Caucus in Kosovo has been effective in promoting women's issues across party lines. In 2011, they blocked a vote by leaving the chamber when their concerns were not taken into account (UNDP, 2016). UNDP attributes the Caucus' success to being highly visible, building strong relationships with powerful actors, and adopting a long-term, incremental approach. Despite this, they have not yet been able to establish quotas for women in leadership positions, only on party lists.

UNDP used a training and mentoring approach in **Montenegro**, which resulted in improved status of female politicians and the establishment of new women's forums in political parties (UNDP, 2016). There is now a cross-party pool of gender equality trainers, who are frequently used. Quotas were established alongside fines for the party if their electoral lists do not meet gender equality provisions (UNDP, 2016).

The gender analysis of **BiH** (Hughson, 2014) shows that women's representation in formal politics is not equal to men's. In 2013, all nine ministries were headed by men, and parliament only included 19 per cent women in 2011. There are very few women employed in the security sector. While women may be employed in the political sector, they are not in high-level positions. Women make up 51 per cent of the civil service, but they do not occupy decision-making positions. There is a low priority given to 'women's issues' and female politicians have not formed a women's agenda.

Albania's percentage of women in parliament increased from 16.7 per cent in 2013 to 23 per cent in 2015 (UN Women & UNDP, 2016). This was largely due to implementation of the gender quota, increased general awareness, and consistent lobbying by women's organisations. In 2013, the Alliance of Women MPs was formed, which lobbies for gender equality and

mainstreaming. Women currently represent 34.7 per cent of municipality councillors. In 2015, Albania instituted a new 50 per cent quota on lists for municipal elections (UNDP, 2016).

4. Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Traditional gender roles and conservative attitudes towards women's sexuality prevail. The post-socialist situation has left some countries with enduring legacies of gender equality, while rising nationalism, for example in Serbia, can reverse this and re-traditionalise gender roles. In the region, access to maternity care is reasonable, but women may not go to the doctor for any other health needs. Women in work often face discrimination in terms of maternity rights, including questions in job interviews about their marital status and intent to have children, despite laws in place against this (Petričević, 2012). LGBTI rights are poorly protected, with rural areas showing worse discrimination than urban areas.

BiH has a low fertility rate at 1.34 births per woman in 2012, and the average age of first birth is at 26.5 years old (Hughson, 2014). There is very limited information on SRHR given to young people, while projects have met with resistance related to traditional values (Hughson, 2014). Young women's attitudes towards contraception are about the same as older women's, showing that modern forms of contraception have not changed traditional attitudes. LGBTI issues are rarely discussed on a public agenda (Hughson, 2014). Activism in BiH and Serbia has usually been framed under international human rights, although this perceived gender-neutrality can elide the specific needs of women (Dioli, 2011).

Since the end of the conflict, **Serbia** has changed from a secular society to one with high rates of religious identification and increased religious influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in public life, with associated effects on gender equality (Drezgić, 2010). The anti-abortion campaign in the 1990s and the introduction of religious education in public schools in 2001, both triggered by the Church, contributed to the revival and reinforcement of traditional patriarchal values that reduce women's roles to motherhood and nurturing (Drezgić, 2010). Although the anti-abortion campaign was unsuccessful, it raised a public debate about the role of women which reinforced patriarchal gender stereotypes. The law itself remains liberal and pro-choice. There is some suggestion that younger women are taking a more conservative attitude towards abortion than older women, who remember the more gender-equal socialist period (Drezgić, 2010). In the 2005 Constitution, the right to decide about childbirth is stipulated as 'everyone's' right rather than the legal norm of 'women's' right, suggesting negligence of women's reproductive rights (Drezgić, 2010). In Serbia, 22 per cent of women were victims of sexual harassment at work, usually verbal comments (Petričević, 2012). Only one in ten women asked for help, mostly from their boss (Petričević, 2012).

A 20-year review of gender dysphoria and sex reassignment treatment in Serbia (Vujovic, 2009) shows a striking result in the ratio of male-to-female (MTF) and female-to-male (FTM) people being 1:1. Most clinics in Europe have a much higher proportion of MTF patients. However, the authors offer no explanation for this. Serbia also has a young population of transgender people, with most people seeking reassignment treatment between the ages of 20 to 25, which is younger than in other European clinics. Applicants had mostly completed secondary school (79 per cent MTF and 69 per cent FTM), and higher education (8 per cent of FTM and 3.6 per cent of MTF). Free sex reassignment surgery was performed one year after the initiation of hormone therapy. 12 per cent of MTF people and 18 per cent of FTM people did not opt for sex reassignment surgery and were satisfied with hormonal treatment only, not giving a detailed

explanation why surgical adaptation was not desirable for them. No patients expressed regret for undertaking the treatment (Vujovic, 2009).

The strong UN presence in **Kosovo** has meant that the territory has a more inclusive legislation on sexuality and LGBTI rights than its neighbours (Dioli, 2011). However, access to justice appears to be lower for LGBTI people (Färnsveden et al., 2014). Kosovo also has legal conventions on gender equality and women's rights to health (Farnsworth et al., 2016). In a comprehensive survey of health, the Kosovo Women's Network (Farnsworth et al., 2016) found that only 35 per cent of respondents knew that Main Family Medicine Centres provide reproductive health services. Lack of information also seems to be among the main reasons for low contraception use; only 20.5 per cent of all respondents and 11 per cent of women reported using modern contraceptives. Related, 11 per cent of women said they have had an abortion in their lifetimes. Abortion is legal up to the tenth week of pregnancy. Women had more sociocultural barriers than men in accessing healthcare, including lack of time and income, and with 63 per cent saying that they decide when to go to the doctor, and 23 per cent saying their male partner decides. Rural women faced more financial, cultural and patient-provider relationship barriers in accessing healthcare than men or urban women (Farnsworth et al., 2016). Bosnian and Turkish women tended to face more barriers than men of the same ethnicities, and significantly more barriers than Albanian women and men. Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian and Gorani women and men had among the most geographic, financial and cultural barriers to accessing healthcare.

Albania has a comprehensive legislative framework to protect the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls. However, significant gaps remain in the organisation and integration of services; addressing gender-based violence; providing mental health screening and screening for cancers of the reproductive system; and drafting of legislation that guarantees the rights of transgender women (UN Women & UNDP, 2016). Capacities for providing nationwide quality services that respond to the specific health needs of women and men require strengthening at every level of care (UN Women & UNDP, 2016). In Albania, LGBTI women face discrimination and marginalisation every day, as Albanian society is generally very homophobic and conservative (UN Women & UNDP, 2016). There are no LGBTI NGOs outside Tirana. Families can disown lesbian family members, leaving them without a source of income or support, or they are sometimes forced into arranged marriages. There are recent laws against discrimination based on sexual and gender orientation.

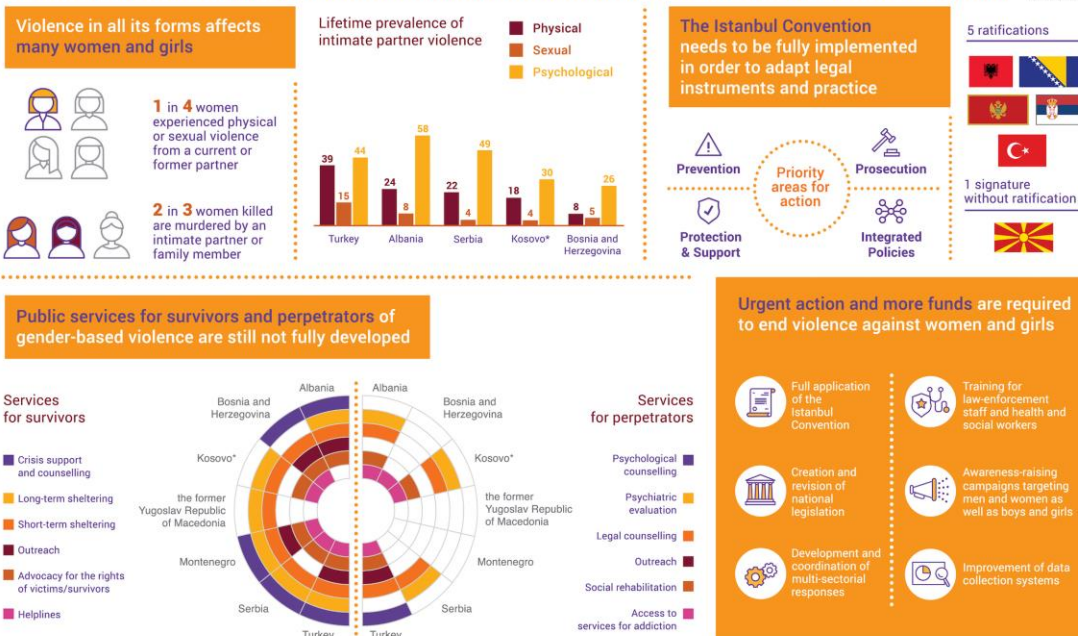
5. Violence against women and girls

Domestic violence is prevalent in the region. A review of the region shows that every Western Balkan country has a national strategy to combat domestic violence (Petričević, 2012). Strategies note the need to engage with men and boys and change attitudes towards domestic violence. Women largely do not report incidents, due to mistrust of security and justice institutions, as well as norms of acceptance. The legal systems do not adequately protect victims, with, for example, the possibility of having their children taken away in Serbia, if they cannot protect them from an abusive father (Petričević, 2012). Shelters are sparse and underfunded in the region, dependent on donor funding which means they operate inconsistently. There are not many shelters with staff trained specifically in domestic violence issues, as services tend to be offered by general women's rights organisations or social welfare services. Free legal aid is also precarious, usually provided by civil society, although there are legal provisions in most countries for free aid (Petričević, 2012).

TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



Source: UNDP: <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/img/Gender%20Equality/undp-rbec-infographic-violence-against-women.jpg>

Studies in **Albania** suggest that domestic violence is under-reported, but even taking this into account, the reported numbers are still high, across all regions, classes, social groups, and educational levels (Luarasi et al., 2013). Two-thirds of Albanian women have experienced domestic violence (Petričević, 2012). A UNICEF study shows that one in two children has been a victim of violence (Luarasi et al., 2013). Patriarchal attitudes are common, and women are long used to traditional submissive roles, even while they are increasingly in the workforce and contributing financially to the household (Luarasi et al., 2013). The legal framework has consistently improved, with a variety of protective and punitive laws passed (Luarasi et al., 2013). A recent change in the law in 2012 has increased punishment to up to five years' imprisonment, which has increased the number of cases reported to the police (Petričević, 2012). NGOs have been active in petitioning government and contributing to drafting laws (Luarasi et al., 2013). Local governments have implemented steering committees to manage the domestic violence issue, connecting social workers with legal representatives and other services (Luarasi et al., 2013). A survey shows increasing trust in the institutions responsible for dealing with violence, and an increase in reporting of incidents (UN Women & UNDP, 2016). Despite this commitment, services for victims of violence remain limited compared to need (Luarasi et al., 2013). Albanian women have cited divorce as another way to reclaim dignity, self-esteem and control over their lives (Luarasi, et al., 2013).

A prevalence survey in **BiH** shows that 47 per cent of women had experienced violence since the age of 15, with the most prevalent forms being psychological violence (42 per cent) and physical (24 per cent), usually perpetrated by their partners (Hughson, 2014). Violence is commonly experienced amongst all classes, rural/urban, poverty levels and age. Alcoholism was identified

as a significant predictor of violence. There are laws in place to protect victims of violence, including nine safe houses in BiH, where victims of violence can be relocated. Social work teams are beginning to incorporate new practices to respond to cases of violence. However, there is a very low rate of reporting incidents of domestic violence, a low rate of prosecution, and lenient sentences (Hughson, 2014). Some domestic violence in BiH is seen as a legacy of the war, with both men and women suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and more generally from poverty, unemployment and substance abuse (Hughson, 2014). VAWG is common in this context, where there is a history of violent conflict, patriarchal values, women's economic dependence, and an emphasis on women's role in keeping the family together (Hughson, 2014).

In **Serbia**, data from the 2006 National Health Survey shows that women were 1.7 times more likely than men to have experienced physical violence in the family (1.28 per cent vs. 0.75 per cent) regardless of who were the perpetrator(s) (Djikanovic et al., 2013). 1.28 per cent is a low level of reported physical violence, and the authors suggest it may have been underreported due to the health focus of the survey. A WHO study showed that nearly one in four women in Serbia has experienced physical violence in the family from a male intimate partner at least once in their lifetime, and 3.2 per cent of women have experienced it in the last 12 months. Djikanovic et al. (2013) did not study psychological violence in the family, which is far more frequent and is also harmful to health. They show a strong association between exposure to physical violence in the family and health problems among adults in Serbia. Women who are exposed to physical violence in the family are at increased risk for chest pain, neck pain, foot oedema, eczema, headache, insomnia, depression, pain in whole-body, and dizziness. Among men, exposure to physical violence in the family was associated with back pain, insomnia, depression, and frequent urination (Djikanovic et al., 2013). In 2011, the protocol for healthcare professionals on how to protect and deal with women who have experienced violence was launched in Serbia (Djikanovic et al., 2013).

A review of the services around domestic violence in Serbia shows that services are underfunded, under-staffed and over-worked (Brankovic, 2015). Collaboration between the state services and NGOs is relatively weak, and usually at the commitment of specific individuals rather than systematically. Service providers considered the judiciary as still being weak on the issue of VAWG, but found that collaborations with the police were good (Brankovic, 2015).

In FYR **Macedonia**, the citizen Women's Lobby and women parliamentarians drafted and passed a law against domestic violence in 2014 (UNDP, 2016). The coalition was important to its success, as were on-air debates about gender-based violence, raising public awareness (UNDP, 2016).

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are prevalent across the region, overwhelmingly owned and used by men. A study commissioned by SEESAC (Božanić, 2016) shows that there are strong links between SALW proliferation and violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence. In the South East Europe region, levels of intentional homicide rates dropped rapidly after 1995, the year of the Dayton Peace Agreement, and are now lower than the global average. Female homicides are low, but almost invariably committed by an intimate partner. Women are disproportionately victims of firearms related incidents, in comparison to their level of ownership. Domestic violence involving a firearm is more likely to end in a fatal outcome. In Serbia in 2015, 46 per cent of women murdered in domestic violence were killed by firearms. This paper (Božanić, 2016) suggests that the male ownership of firearms reinforces gender norms of male dominance over women. SALW are also used to threaten and inflict psychological violence. A study in Vojvodina, Serbia showed a correlation between the readiness to use

firearms and perpetrators' participation in war/military conflicts: 22.2 per cent of perpetrators who participated in war/military conflicts used firearms in domestic violence incidents, in comparison with 8.8 per cent of those who did not take part in military conflicts (Božanić, 2016).

Women and women's organisations have played an important role in disarmament processes and advocating for stricter SALW regulations (Božanić, 2016). Women are likely to support a reduction in SALW possession and to state that they 'do not like guns'. However, women's organisations are not always included in discussions around SALW control, which tends to be institutionally masculine (Božanić, 2016).

6. Women and work

Women are formally employed much less than men; the labour market in the region comprises around 37 per cent women. Women earn less than men and do not occupy high level positions, as they face gendered barriers to access.



Source: UNDP: <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/img/Gender%20Equality/undp-rbec-infographic-economic-inequalities-between-men-women.jpg>

An analysis of **Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia** (Avlijaš et al., 2013) shows that in Serbia, employed women are better qualified but earn 11 per cent less than men. In Macedonia, the gender wage gap is even more pronounced at women earning 18 per cent less than men, despite being better qualified. In Montenegro, it is 16 per cent in favour of men. In all three countries, women face high barriers to working, so in order to access employment at all, they need to be better qualified than the male candidates. The wage gap is higher in the private sector, and the paper (Avlijaš et al., 2013) suggests that gender discrimination is stronger in the

private sector. Women in the public sector are more educated and have better jobs than men, but still earn less – due to gender discrimination.

The analysis of **BiH** (Hughson, 2014) suggests that women's economic empowerment is a crucial issue at this time. There is a high level of poverty, with 18 per cent of the population living in relative poverty. Traditional gender roles mean that family provides a protective structure for women – single women are much more likely to be poor than women living with family. Among men, the poorest people are those with large families. The poorest area of BiH is Republika Srpska, with almost every fifth inhabitant living in relative poverty. There are fewer differences between urban and rural areas than usually thought, as agriculture plays a diminishing role in economic life. However, the six main cities have much higher employment and wages than rural areas, leading this author to suggest that the areas of most poverty are in the medium-sized towns (Hughson, 2014).

The overall employment rate in BiH is 32 per cent, and it is much higher for men than for women (men 41 per cent and women 23 per cent⁴) (Hughson, 2014). This is a very low participation of women in the labour force compared to the rest of South East Europe. Women are overrepresented in education, health care and social protection sectors, while men are overrepresented in construction work and security. Women are always less represented on higher levels of decision making.

Kosovo municipalities had only 28 per cent women among their total number of employees in 2015 (KGSC, 2017). Only 18 per cent of women in the country participate in the formal labour market, the lowest rate in Europe (Färnsveden et al., 2014). Fewer than 10 per cent of businesses are women-owned or women-led (Färnsveden et al., 2014).

In post-socialist **Albania**, a re-traditionalisation of gender roles is visible, with women mostly responsible for domestic and unpaid care work, and not in the labour market (UN Women & UNDP, 2016). In 2015, employment was 60.5 per cent for men and 45.5 per cent for women. Despite the lack of formal employment, women actually work for two hours more per day than men, due to their care responsibilities. In 2011, the gender wage gap in employment was calculated at 18 per cent in favour of men, and twice as high in rural areas. In 2015, the gender wage gap was calculated for the formal sector at 7 per cent in favour of men (UN Women & UNDP, 2016). 45 per cent of the female population was not in the labour market at all, compared to 26.6 per cent of men. Of the women who work, half are self-employed in the agricultural sector, mainly for subsistence (UN Women & UNDP, 2016).

7. Land and property

Property is overwhelmingly owned by men. Inheritance almost always goes to men, even where women have the rights to it. Urban areas have more women owners than rural areas.

The FAO and World Bank provide land ownership statistics for the Western Balkans, disaggregated by gender (FAO and WB, 2014). The data comes from Land Registry databases, covering 2005 to 2013. Overall, about two-thirds of all property and mortgages are in men's names. Urban areas have more women owners than rural areas.

⁴ This is different to the UNDP infographic due to differences in what is measured and the date of measurement.

This paper reports that in BiH, 75 per cent of all property ownership goes to men. Women are more likely to own property in urban areas. There have been few changes over the report's time period. In Republika Srpska, 70 per cent of property ownership goes to men. Mortgages are similarly distributed, with about two-thirds being in men's names. In Serbia, men own about 60 per cent of property, with women owning 40 per cent. As in Bosnia, urban areas have more women owners. In Serbia, additional data were collected to show the source of property ownership. Inheritance and gifts were 65 per cent owned by men, but property that was purchased had a higher proportion of women owners (43 per cent). In Albania, 62 per cent of property ownership goes to men. In Kosovo, 75 per cent of property ownership and 83 per cent of mortgages go to men. In Montenegro, 75 per cent of property ownership goes to men. In FYR Macedonia, 83 per cent of property ownership goes to men. However, mortgages are almost at the same rate, with 44 per cent going to women and 56 per cent to men (FAO and WB, 2014). Inheritance and transference within the family usually privileges men, even if women originally owned the property (Petričević, 2012).

In Albania, although there is legislation to allow women's ownership of land, only 36 per cent of urban land is owned by women, while in rural areas, land management and ownership is overwhelmingly male dominated (UN Women & UNDP, 2016). There are very rare cases of women claiming property rights through the court system.

8. Migration

Women refugees from Syria have been provided with some women-friendly services, but not enough. There is strong out-migration from Albania for economic reasons, but this does not seem to advantage women.

The **current refugee crisis** stemming from Syria has resulted in more than 800,000 people transiting from Turkey, through Greece and through the Western Balkans. A UN Women gender assessment (Wolfensohn, 2016) of FYR Macedonia and Serbia, which are mainly transit countries, shows that many women and girls are fleeing conflict in their homeland where they have faced systemic rights violations, including bombardment of civilian areas, killing and disappearance of family members, sexual and gender based violence, obstructed access to food, water and electricity, and destruction of their homes and livelihoods. Many have been repeatedly displaced and some have suffered violence, exploitation and abuse while seeking asylum. Women often serve as the main caretakers for children and elderly family members, further increasing their need for protection and support. Up to 42 per cent of refugees and migrants are women (17 per cent) and children (25 per cent) (Wolfensohn, 2016).

The assessment (Wolfensohn, 2016) found many positive examples of responses to the specific needs, priorities and protection risks of refugee and migrant women and girls. These include the systemic collection of and reporting on sex- and age-disaggregated data through the asylum registration system; the establishment of mobile protection teams to identify vulnerable groups and facilities to fast track them; the distribution of targeted non-food items such as dignity kits and women's clothing; the availability of targeted services in reception and transit centres including gynaecological health care, child-friendly and mother/baby-friendly spaces and psychosocial support; in some cases, the existence of women-only spaces within shelter facilities; and the availability of sex-segregated toilets and showers.

Despite these examples of good practice, the assessment (Wolfensohn, 2016) found that response planning, services, protection capacity and information are not yet sufficient to meet their needs and address their distinct vulnerabilities. Specifically, registration systems are not comprehensively identifying and referring at-risk groups, and have weak linkages to protection responses. Qualitative data on women and girls as well as other vulnerable groups is limited, and it is not clear whether or how existing disaggregated data is being used for contingency planning and operations. Overall coordination among and between government and humanitarian actors needs to be streamlined, and there is a need for more systemic and sustained attention to gender and gender-based violence issues. The capacity of front-line actors needs strengthening, as does the capacity of social services and local women's organisations to play an operational role in the response. Some sector-specific services do not yet have adequate provisions in place to ensure that women, girls, boys and men can equally access and benefit from them and targeted services for women and girls are limited or missing, including: systemic protection monitoring, GBV prevention and response services, targeted psychosocial support and trauma counselling, women-only spaces, and full-time gynaecological services on site in transit and reception centres (Wolfensohn, 2016).

In **Albania**, there was very little economic out-migration until the end of the 1980s, when there was a dramatic increase of mostly male migrants to Greece and Italy (Stecklov et al., 2010). This study shows that while there has been an increase in Albanian female migration, this is not associated with increased empowerment or autonomy. Instead, migration strategies are decided at the household level. Daughter migration is dependent on the (preferred) availability of sons as well as by the reaction of daughters to health or property-loss shocks. Household health shocks provide a large deterrent for female migration, and household property loss and pyramid-related shocks provide a large incentive for female migration; however, none of these shocks have any impact on male migration. The lack of female participation in migration appears tied to the high levels of inequality existing within households themselves. The authors (Stecklov et al., 2010) conclude that households appear to be the main decision-making agents behind increasing female migration, and there is little to suggest an emergence of female agency. Instead, women's migration remains solidly entrenched in other people's decision-making.

In contrast, a slightly earlier paper (Mendola and Carletto, 2009) shows that having a migrant abroad decreases the probability of women engaging in paid employment and increases their unpaid work in Albania, presumably because they have more income from remittances and less need to undertake paid work. However, women with past family migration experience are significantly more likely to engage in self-employment and less likely to supply unpaid work. The same relationships do not hold for men. The study (Mendola and Carletto, 2009) also finds that more disadvantaged Albanian women (e.g. less educated) with male-dominated household migration experience are more likely to shift their occupational choices and gain access to remunerative employment. The authors conclude that, in a traditional society like Albania, migration of household members may be a source of both income and bargaining power among members of the family at origin. The gender-biased patterns observed in Albania seem to suggest that, over time, male-dominated migration influences women's employment status and income-earning capacity (Mendola and Carletto, 2009).

9. Roma

All structural disadvantages experienced by women are experienced doubly by Roma women. Roma girls attend school less, marry young, do not work and do not have high aspirations. There appear to be no indications of change over the last decade.

Cukrowska and Kóczé (2013) provide a summary of Roma issues **in education, employment, health and housing**, using data from the 2011 UNDP/WB/EC regional survey on Roma communities. This covers a broader area than just the Western Balkans.

Based on the sample averages of working age individuals, Romani males spent on average 6.71 years in **education**, while Romani females 5.66 years, compared to non-Roma males at 10.95 and females 10.7 (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013). 28 per cent of Romani women aged 16 to 64 have no formal level of education compared to 18 per cent of Romani men and 2 per cent of non-Romani women. In FYR Macedonia, BiH and Serbia, Roma girls start to drop out of school after age 12, and fewer than 80 per cent of Roma women are literate (UNICEF, 2014). A review of aspirations shows that young Roma people do not have significantly higher educational aspirations than elderly Roma, and that Romani women do not have significantly different aspirations and do not assign significantly different values to education than Romani men (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013).

The economic crisis has resulted in a doubling of the **unemployment** rate for Roma in comparison to non-Roma (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013). Almost 65 per cent of Romani women are not participating in the labour market at all, and only 15 per cent are formally employed. Informal work is much more prevalent for Roma than for non-Roma, and particularly for Roma women. Among non-Roma, informal work prevails mainly amongst men. Because of this inequality in work, most Roma women are financially dependent on men. The data reveals that Romani women experience the lowest share of the employment rate, the highest share of inactivity amongst all subgroups based on ethnicity and gender, greater prevalence of informal employment and high disadvantage when compared with non-Romani women in terms of the wage rates (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013).

Roma women continue to hold traditional values about **sexual health and maternity** (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013). 31 per cent of Roma men and 33 per cent of Roma women prefer to get their daughter married before she completes basic education to make sure she does not start her sex life before marriage (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013). Older individuals display a stronger commitment to these traditional values. 51 per cent of Roma men and 54 per cent of Roma women find it unacceptable for a woman to lose her virginity before getting married (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013). A UNICEF study of Roma in BiH, FYR Macedonia, and Serbia (UNICEF, 2014) shows that 15 per cent of Roma women are married before age 15, and around 50 per cent before age 18. Many girls who are married young also have children early: 40 per cent of 15 to 19-year old Roma girls in Serbia had already had a live birth or were pregnant with a first child (UNICEF, 2014). Modern contraception methods are used only to a very low level, and antenatal visits are not frequent enough.

UNICEF (2014) reports that Roma women have skilled birth attendance in BiH, FYR Macedonia, and Serbia at the same rate as non-Roma (99 per cent). However, Cukrowska and Kóczé (2013) state that Roma women are more likely to give birth outside a hospital, and that some countries have a very low rate of births attended by a professional (FYR Macedonia (23 per cent), Bosnia

and Herzegovina (18 per cent), Serbia (16 per cent) and Montenegro (16 per cent).) These differing statistics show that caution is needed in interpreting these studies.

After birth, Roma children continue to experience inequalities. Two to four per cent of Roma children are not registered at birth, which is most likely in the poorest and least educated households (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013). On the other hand, Roma women are much more likely to exclusively breastfeed their babies than non-Roma, which is considered better for the child's development (UNICEF, 2014). There can be gender inequalities in infant feeding. In Macedonia, 69 per cent of Roma boys achieve the minimum meal frequency, while only 56 per cent of girls do (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013).

Roma men and women continue to be **politically disenfranchised**. The very low level of Roma civic and political participation suggests that the interests of Roma communities are not represented in local decision-making processes and policy-making mechanisms (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013). 11 per cent of Roma women reported having experienced gender-based discrimination in society, as opposed to 5 per cent of non-Roma women (Cukrowska and Kóczé, 2013).

The analysis of **BiH** (Hughson, 2014) suggests that Roma women continue to suffer discrimination and domestic violence, with little improvement in their situation since the end of the conflict. Without birth certificates, they are vulnerable to trafficking. Educational attainment for Roma women is very low, with 80 per cent not completing primary education and many women remaining illiterate. Low education leads to low employment and high poverty. Men are more likely to complete education, but this is still low at only 70 per cent attending primary school. Domestic violence is common in the BiH Roma communities. While women might want to report incidents, there is profound mistrust of law institutions, often with good cause, and Roma women may not have health insurance enabling them to access support (Hughson, 2014).

An analysis of Roma girls in **Serbia**, conducted by CARE (CARE Serbia, 2011), shows that there are legal frameworks for inclusion and poverty reduction particularly focusing on Roma women and girls. Despite this, Roma girls are still not attending and achieving in school. Only 4 per cent of Roma children attend pre-school. 66 per cent of Roma children enrol in primary school at the right age, but only 28 per cent reach eighth grade. Fewer than 10 per cent of Roma children attend secondary school. Affirmative action measures, scholarships and mentors have resulted in small increases in enrolled Roma students. Throughout, fewer girls than boys are enrolled, unlike the general population in Serbia. Roma girls tend to do better in school than Roma boys, which this report (CARE Serbia, 2011) attributes to their learned obedience in a patriarchal society, which means they adapt better in school. Teachers noted that early marriage was a big problem for Roma girls, and recommended that Roma issues were addressed through financial assistance to their parents or through scholarships. Early marriage is understood as harmful by Roma families, but is still supported by the community as a way to control adolescent sexuality (CARE Serbia, 2011). Gender norms of obedience mean that Roma girls are unlikely to resist parental pressure to marry or seek support elsewhere.

10. Men and boys

Gender analysis increasingly includes examinations of masculinity and how gender norms affect men and boys as well as women and girls. In the Western Balkans, the ideal of hegemonic masculinity suggests that gun ownership and violence is linked to masculine identity and social

status, and used as a way of asserting this identity. Božanić (2016), in a paper for SEESAC, recommends that reducing violence entails targeting the gendered social system which associates guns with masculine power, protection, and control over women.

Around 95 per cent of guns in the region are owned by men, a proportion that has remained consistent over time. Nearly all firearm related incidents in the region are committed by men against men (Božanić, 2016). Homicides related to criminal activity or socio-political agendas affect men to a much greater extent than women. Young men (15 to 29) are also more likely to be both victims and perpetrators of SALW violence (Božanić, 2016).

In Kosovo, there were few psychosocial healing programmes aimed at men, meaning only a fraction have received counselling for trauma (Färnsveden et al., 2014). No shelters exist in Kosovo for men who have been victims of GBV, usually fathers exerting violence over sons.

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